

Editing Your Story

July 12, 2015

About a month ago my third book came back from my editor. My book is called *Fix Your Screwed Up Life*, and it deals with the problem of low self-esteem. Writing the book wasn't all that hard, but having to rewrite sections I thought were well-conceived and finished is proving to be very challenging.

In one chapter I wrote descriptions of what healthy self-esteem looks like in a person, a couple, a family, a community and the world. My editor returned my manuscript with a big, bright highlighted comment on the section about a family with healthy self-esteem.

She commented that in all the other sections I'd painted a positive picture of how healthy self-esteem looks, but in the family section I offered a dark, dark description and it just doesn't fit.

The family section is where I told *my* story. Not just in one concise paragraph, but on and on and on.... pages of what a family with *unhealthy* self-esteem looks like. And once it was pointed out to me I couldn't deny she was correct. It didn't fit.

But I didn't want to rewrite it. I fussed and procrastinated and argued with her in my head (I'm good at that -- comes from a low-self-esteem family). I put the draft down for weeks.

The whole point of that part, of my problem, was feeling invisible, and now my editor thought it didn't fit and was depressing and probably should come out. And I felt as though my righteous indignation, my cry against the emotional abuse I suffered, was meaningless and nobody wanted to hear it.

When you grow up feeling invisible or invaluable, all it takes is the suggestion that nobody wants to hear what you have to say -- or that your story is unimportant -- in order to plunge right back down into that childhood fear.

You see, what I am doing every time I tell the story of how difficult it was to grow up with my mother, is asking for someone to believe in me. I imagine that someone reading or hearing it will say, "Yes, me too, I understand you Priscilla. That happened to me, too." And in that way I will be visible.

So I didn't want that part to come out! I felt this depressing chapter in my history was an important part of my validation.

But I took a chance, just to see. I just chopped it out -- just to see. And it did read better. That whole section flows much more comfortably.

Yet a part of me is still looking for a place for my story in this otherwise very positive book. It just doesn't fit, but I resist letting it go because -- taa daa! -- this is how I see myself! I'm so invested in this story that that's who I *am*! That's what came to light in this really silly struggle to edit. This miserable emotionally abusive childhood is my identity. My badge.

Wow. You can imagine what was going on with me as that little tidbit came to my attention.

How important I think it is that everyone know the story of my crappy childhood because that's part of who I am and what made me what I am and the key to understanding me.

Really?

Because now I have to consider that maybe it isn't relevant anymore. Maybe people don't really want to hear it, despite my desire to tell it.

Here's what my crossroads looked like:

- am I going to let it define me regardless of the way it impacts my life (because won't it financially, my reputation, my credibility as an author, hypnotist, psychic medium, an expert on recovering healthy self-esteem). am I so married to this view of myself that I'm going to persist in it even if it holds me back?

or

- am I going to archive it and go forward without using it to rationalize, explain, defend, my decisions, my reasons for being here, doing the work I do?

That defined me *once*. Then those scars became a ladder on which I climbed up out of the living pain and into my present work, beliefs, self-esteem.

I came face to face with this crossroads and had to admit that my childhood fears and experiences don't define me anymore. It's part of my identity for *me* perhaps to keep my expectations in check. It's a guideline and a framework for me but it's not something that has to be part of my relationship with the rest of the world.

I'm learning in the most brilliant way that my clients, my readers, the people I interact with are really feeding back to me some credible, usable, important information. If I'm open to hearing it, really just guides me into a better me.

I don't know who is going to read this book, but the editor -- who does know about readership, the marketplace, and authors presenting themselves, suggested that this as-yet-not-formed audience is going to be more disrupted by my tale of woe, and furthermore do I really want people I don't know to identify that with me?

I thought it was important, but when seen from another person's point of view I realize that no, I don't want that. I don't want people to associate me with a crappy childhood. So the more I think about my relationships, not just the intimate ones I have, but the people I don't even know yet and will never know -- how do I want them to see me? I know I don't have total control over that, and my purpose isn't to manage how people see me, but rather how do I want to be known? What is going to be my legacy?

I just did a reading where a spirit person observed to her sister, my client, that she was enjoying the positive effects of her rather short term in physical form. From the afterlife she could see her moments of kindness, generosity, and service spreading out like ripples on a pond, continuing to change lives even after the many years she'd been gone. A smile, even, that turned someone's day around, and how that action continued and affected human consciousness and goodwill horizontally through communities and vertically down through subsequent generations.

Is my legacy going to be one where I sit in Heaven and watch the sour taste of my unpleasant childhood having a ripple effect across time and community?

For those of you who've been listening to me over the years have witnessed me transforming my relationship with my mother. So why am I still telling the tale of what a bad mother she was and how it damaged me?

My history helps to shape my present and the kind of person I wish to be in the future, but also under my control is how often and to whom I tell that part of my history. And -- as hard as this is to admit to myself most of all -- it's just not relevant anymore.

It doesn't matter. (I'm waiting for lightning to strike me, hold on).

Nope, see? It doesn't matter. Not now, not anymore.

There are audiences that I interact with on all different levels of frequency -- including spirit people -- and they all have the ability to hold a mirror up for me and ask "Is this what you want?"

My editor finally contacted me for a status update after I'd been silent for weeks. I told her what a difficult time I had cutting this out she said her teacher once told her she needed to become adept at killing her little darlings. Some little part of our story we love so much. It's true isn't it? We have to put that part to bed or kill it if we want to move on.

In dying we are born again, and maybe this even applies to killing off those old stories, those little darlings. We can die and be born again day by day in each interaction that we have.

For me to get closer to God, that part of me has to die. That painful part that I tagged as essential to my identity -- well, I have to kill it. It's not an ending, though I find myself inexplicably

grieving for it. When I let that part of me die, I'm born again, into my real identity, the immortal holy spirit that abides in me, in God, and in all my brothers and sisters.

I'd like to leave you with a passage from the Bible, Philippians 4:8. I know this isn't a bible-based congregation, but these are wise words.

Finally, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.

Amen.